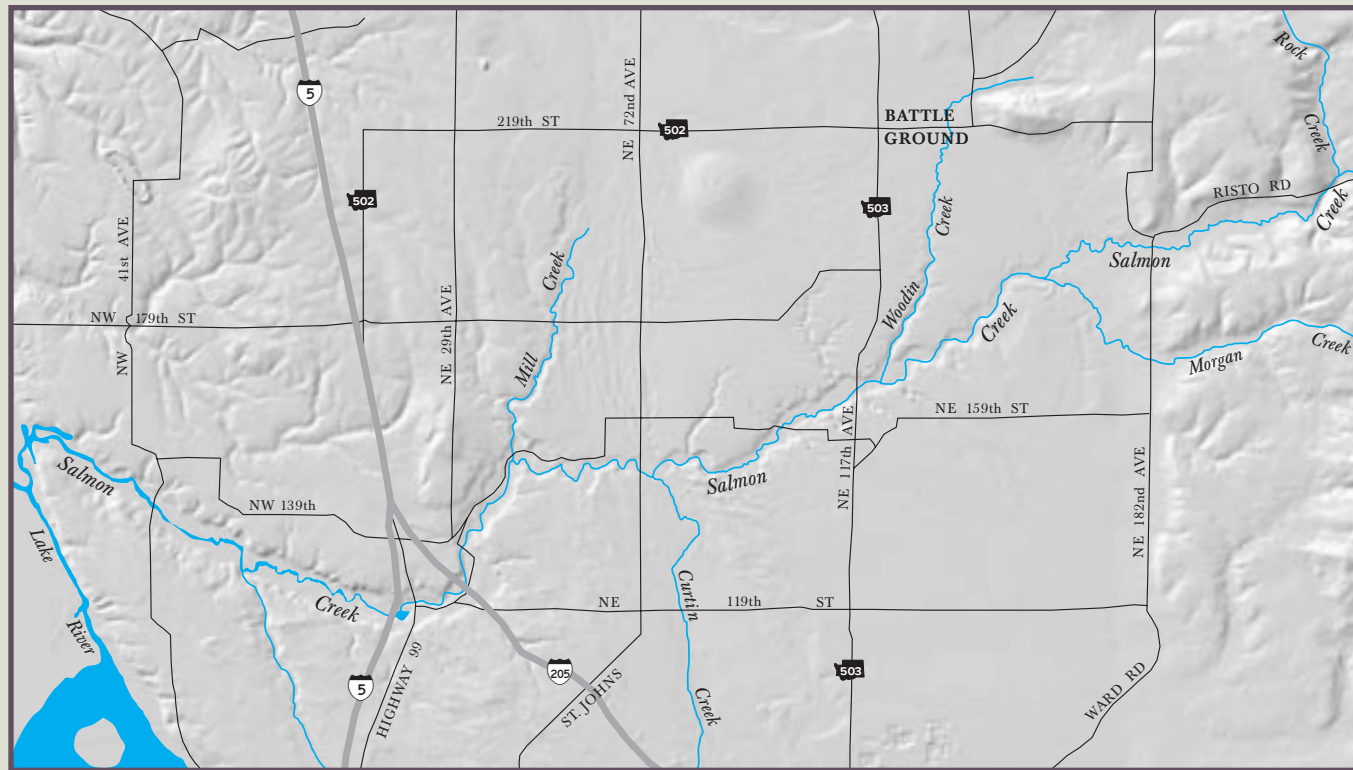


SALMON CREEK

**A VALUABLE RESOURCE
FOR CLARK COUNTY**



SALMON CREEK and tributaries



Although it winds through the heart of a rapidly urbanizing region, Salmon Creek still provides important areas of fish and wildlife habitat. This natural greenway is a scenic backdrop for the many homes along its course and offers a variety of recreation opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts throughout the region.

Twenty-six miles long, Salmon Creek lies entirely within Clark County. It originates in the forested hills northeast of Hockinson and flows generally west past farms and rural homes. It continues through the heart of fast-growing Hazel Dell and Felida and ends at Lake River, which flows into the Columbia River.

Salmon Creek was historically rich in forests and fish. Old-timers tell stories about the days when salmon filled the stream. Back then, when settlement consisted mostly of small farms, fish were so plentiful they were placed around fruit trees as fertilizer.



TRIBUTARIES

The Salmon Creek watershed includes several smaller streams that flow into Salmon Creek. The main ones include:

- **Rock Creek** ~ located in the headwaters of Salmon Creek. Provides clean spawning gravels and rearing habitat for fish.
- **Woodin Creek** ~ flows through the city of Battle Ground.
- **Mill Creek** ~ originates near Battle Ground. Flows into Salmon Creek near the Washington State University campus.
- **Morgan Creek** ~ dairy farms along this creek are being replaced by rural homes.
- **Curtin Creek** ~ springs feed lower Curtin Creek with cool water all summer long. Much of the creek length flows through a ditch that drains marshes once used for pastures and farmland.
- **Cougar Creek** ~ the most urbanized stream in the watershed, Cougar Creek nevertheless continues to flow freely through a wooded ravine.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Salmon Creek and its tributaries and wetlands are home to ducks, geese, great blue herons, and other birds. Steelhead and cutthroat trout still return to sections of the watershed. Mammals such as beaver, raccoon, and muskrat, thrive in areas with lush vegetation.



RECREATION

The Vancouver-Clark Parks & Recreation Salmon Creek Greenway trail is a haven for walkers, runners, rollerbladers, equestrians, and cyclists. It offers views of Mt. Hood and excellent opportunities for viewing native waterfowl and other wildlife. The three-mile trail can be accessed from either the Felida Bridge at NW 36th Avenue or Salmon Creek Park at 1112 NE 117th Street. At the trail's eastern end, Salmon Creek Park/Klineline Pond offers excellent swimming facilities and large lawn areas for picnicking, sunbathing, and special events.



WATER RESOURCES

Aquifers under Salmon Creek provide high-quality drinking water for 26,000 homes and businesses served by Clark Public Utilities. They also enhance stream flow during dry weather.



CHALLENGES

Salmon Creek currently exceeds state and federal standards for water temperature, turbidity, and coliform bacteria. Salmon Creek is on the Department of Ecology's list of Washington's polluted rivers. 1000 Friends of Washington has named it one of Washington's ten most endangered places.

A variety of human activities, including the day-to-day activities of residents, threaten the health of Salmon Creek. A growing population compounds the problem. Some sources of pollution include failing septic systems, pet and livestock waste, pesticides and fertilizers from residential and agricultural use, and oils and other toxins from motor vehicles. Aquatic life is threatened by polluted stormwater runoff from fields, roads, roofs, and parking lots, and by exposed soil that erodes into the stream.

Because Salmon Creek is fed from rain and groundwater sources, the amount of water in the creek is significantly lower in the summer than in the winter. Any direct withdrawal of water from

Salmon Creek for irrigation or other uses, legal or illegal, also lowers stream flows. Septic system contamination that reaches Salmon Creek during the low-flow months can create conditions that are especially detrimental to juvenile fish; it also poses a health risk for people who have contact with the water.



WHAT'S BEING DONE TO HELP THE CREEK?

Clark County and other agencies are working with landowners, farmers, developers, businesses, homeowners, and others to provide information on pollution sources and encourage the use of best management practices that minimize any damage to watershed health. To control stormwater runoff, Clark County has constructed detention basins, swales, and wetlands to hold and filter polluted runoff, releasing it slowly.

In addition to pollution prevention, much work is underway to restore the creek's natural habitat. Agencies such as Clark County and Clark Public Utilities, and some private property owners are working to restore its stream banks and preserve sections of the creek that are intact.

Placement of tree stumps helps to stabilize streambanks on Salmon Creek



EVERYONE CAN HELP

Everyone who lives, works, or recreates in the Salmon Creek watershed can take the following steps to improve its health. These tips apply to virtually any watershed in the lower Columbia region.

■ **Don't waste water:** Urban streams and rivers experience low summer flows with increased population. Diverting surface water without a permit is illegal.

■ **Landscape with native vegetation:** It requires less water and fewer pesticides and herbicides. When landscaping or remodeling, prevent bare soil from eroding by mulching, seeding, or by other means.

■ **Revegetate streambanks with native plants:** They anchor the soil, preventing erosion into the stream. They also provide wildlife habitat.

■ **Maintain your septic system:** Failing septic systems are a major source of water pollution in Salmon Creek. Proper septic system maintenance is required by law and is especially important for residents who live along Salmon Creek or its tributaries.



■ **Don't dump into the storm drains:** What goes into storm drains goes into our waterways. Motor oil, paint, and other toxic materials degrade streams and wetlands.

■ **Avoid or limit use of herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers:** When they drain into ditches, storm drains, and streams, they contaminate the water.

■ **Don't dump yard debris or grass clippings into ravines, ditches, or streams:** These organic materials rob a stream of its oxygen.

■ **Properly dispose of hazardous household or industrial wastes:** Report chemical spills or illegal dumping.

■ **Don't wash your car in a street or driveway:** This sends dirty water into waterways. Wash it at an automated car wash that recycles the water.

■ **Maintain your car:** Oil and other substances from improperly maintained automobiles enter Salmon Creek when rain carries them off roads into waterways.

■ **Fence livestock away from the stream and clean up after your pets:** Animal waste is a major source of fecal coliform bacteria in Salmon Creek.

■ **Form a group to monitor, restore, and preserve a section of Salmon Creek.**



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Clark Conservation District

(360) 883-1987

www.clark.scc.wa.gov

Clark County Clean Water Program

(360) 397-6118

www.clark.wa.gov/water-resources

Clark County Endangered Species Program

(360) 397-2022

www.saveoursalmon.com

Clark County Health Department

(360) 397-8428

www.clark.wa.gov/health

Clark Public Utilities

(360) 992-8577

www.clarkpublicutilities.com

Washington Department of Ecology

(360) 407-6300

www.ecy.wa.gov

Watershed Stewards Program

(360) 397-6060 ext. 7703

<http://clark.wsu.edu/volunteer/ws>



CLEAN STREAM ≈ SALMON CREEK

Clark County Health Department's Clean Stream ≈ Salmon Creek is a project funded by a Washington Department of Ecology grant. It is designed to:

- Improve water quality in the Salmon Creek Basin,
- Protect public health, and
- Provide technical assistance to help homeowners extend the life of their septic systems.

To arrange to have your septic system surveyed or for additional information about your system, please contact the Clark County Health Department at (360) 397-8428. *Join us in protecting the health of the Salmon Creek Watershed!*

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